

its colour and that of the legs are both slightly variable.²⁸ This latter fact deserves attention, because the colour of the legs and beak is highly serviceable in discriminating the several closely allied wild forms.²⁹ At our Shows two breeds are exhibited; viz. the Embden and Toulouse; but they differ in nothing except colour.³⁰ Recently a smaller and singular variety has been imported from Sebastopol,³¹ with the scapular feathers (as I hear from Mr. Tegetmeier, who sent me specimens) greatly elongated, curled, and even spirally twisted. The margins of these feathers are rendered plumose by the divergence of the barbs and barbules, so that they resemble in some degree those on the back of the black Australian swan. These feathers are likewise remarkable from the central shaft, which is excessively thin and transparent, being split into fine filaments, which, after running for a space free, sometimes coalesce again. It is a curious fact that these filaments are regularly clothed on each side with fine down or barbules, precisely like those on the proper barbs of the feather. This structure of the feathers is transmitted to half-bred birds. In *Gallus sonneratii* the barbs and barbules blend together, and form thin horny plates of the same nature with the shaft: in this variety of the goose, the shaft divides into filaments which acquire barbules, and thus resemble true barbs.

Although the domestic goose certainly differs somewhat from any known wild species, yet the amount of variation which it has undergone, as compared with that of most domesticated animals, is singularly small. This fact can be partially accounted for by selection not having come largely into play. Birds of all kinds which present many distinct races are valued as pets or ornaments; no one makes a pet of the goose; the name, indeed, in more languages than one, is a term of reproach. The goose is valued for its size and flavour, for the whiteness of its feathers which adds to their

²⁸ W. Thompson, 'Natural Hist. of Ireland,' 1851, vol. iii. p. 31. The Rev. E. S. Dixon gave me some information on the varying colour of the beak and legs.

²⁹ Mr. A. Strickland, in 'Annals

and Mag. of Nat. Hist.,' 3rd series, vol. iii. 1859 p. 122.

³⁰ 'Poultry Chronicle,' vol. i., 1854, p. 498; vol. iii. p. 210.

³¹ 'The Cottage Gardener,' Sept 4th, 1860, p. 348.